

MONTEREY COUNTY FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION
FIRE OPERATIONS MANUAL
Section 6
MONTEREY COUNTY FIRE & ARSON TASK FORCE
FIRE INVESTIGATOR REQUEST PROCEDURES

Purpose

The Monterey County Fire and Arson Task Force (hereinafter known as The Task Force) has been formed with the primary purpose of assisting agencies with investigating unique, large or an otherwise challenging incidents. The *Task Force* is to supplement investigation resources for limited duration operations, specifically when assistance is needed due to; suspected arson, serious injury or fatality fires, fires that are high value to the community and/or financially and fires that are set in the commencement or concealment of a crime. This plan is not intended to remove investigation responsibility from the agency having jurisdiction.

Objectives

1. To establish and maintain a call out list of qualified investigators to assist with the investigation of fires, arson and explosions.
2. To assist with improving life safety *The Task Force*, as part of the Tri-county Fire Investigators Association, is tasked with bringing law enforcement and fire service agencies together to curb the rising incidents of arson and the malicious bombings that endanger life and property; to establish better coordination and cooperation between law enforcement and fire authorities; and to further establish communications with the appropriate authorities charged with the responsibility of prosecuting such acts.
3. Therefore, the *Task Force* will facilitate joint specialized training in investigative techniques; will further develop the capability of fire and law enforcement agencies to recognize and follow to their conclusion, the investigation of the acts of arson and bombing; to provide proper liaison with law enforcement and fire agencies and to provide training in specialized areas of arson and bomb investigation.

Description

1. Mutual Aid Investigator: A qualified Fire Investigator, on the *Task Force* who has been requested by a department which has a qualified Fire Investigator on the Monterey County Fire & Arson Task Force. (Section 6.1)
2. Other resources may include assistance from the CDF / State Fire Marshal's Office Arson / Bomb Unit, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, & Firearms, or any other public or private investigative resource. Also, many fire agencies have arrangements and agreements with neighboring fire departments or law enforcement agencies and personnel to lend routine investigative assistance.

Request Procedure

1. The Incident Commander (IC) at the fire scene determines the need for a fire investigator. The IC's first choice should be from within their department. If a fire investigator is not available from within their department, or if additional investigators are needed, the IC may request a mutual aid fire investigator(s) through the Monterey County Fire Mutual Aid System.
2. The Incident Commander may wish to request a specific fire investigator by name. This type of request will typically not go through the Fire Investigator Call Out List. The Incident Commander shall make the name request to Fire Comm who will then forward the request to the name requested employee's agency assigned duty chief. The duty chief will determine the availability for the requested fire investigator and advise Fire Comm.
3. To initiate the request for a fire investigator from the *Task Force* Call-Out List, the Incident Commander will contact Fire Comm by radio or by phone and request fire investigator, or investigators, from the *Task Force*.
4. Fire Comm will consult the Fire Investigator Call-Out List located in the Monterey County Fire Mutual Aid binder. This List will contain the names of fire investigators authorized by the *Task Force* as call out investigators and the approved method for making contact.
5. Individuals not listed on the Call-Out List will not be requested as a mutual aid Investigator as part of the *Task Force*. It is the responsibility of the current Director of the *Task Force* to provide Fire Comm with an up-to-date list of authorized mutual fire investigators (See Call-Out Requirements Section 6.1)
6. If no investigators are available from the list, then the Fire Comm dispatcher will notify the requesting Incident Commander that the list has been exhausted and that a call-out investigator from the *Task Force* is not available. The Incident Commander may request Fire Comm to contact San Benito and/or Santa Cruz counties and request a mutual aid investigator.
7. If no investigators are available from Santa Cruz or San Benito, then the Fire Comm dispatcher will notify the requesting Incident Commander that there are no investigators available.
8. Once a fire investigator is located and accepts the assignment, the Fire Comm dispatcher will brief the mutual aid fire investigator on the incident and assignment and will get an estimated time of arrival (ETA) to the fire scene. The mutual aid fire investigator's name, radio call sign, and ETA will then be transferred to the Incident Commander.

9. The Investigator will contact the Incident commander for a brief report with the objective to ascertain any needs for additional resources. Additional resources will then be requested by the Incident Commander via Fire Comm. The investigator will use the apprentice and trainee Call-out list to request assistance not requiring another investigator.

Scene Investigative Procedures:

1. It is the responsibility of the requesting fire agency and the expectation of the responding mutual aid fire investigator that the fire scene will be rendered safe and secure. Any current or suspected criminal, explosive, hazardous materials, or other hazardous condition will be addressed by the requesting fire agency, local law enforcement or other appropriate agencies prior to the arrival of the mutual aid fire investigator.
2. The mutual aid fire investigator will proceed to the fire scene and be prepared to help direct the fire origin and cause investigation. The mutual aid fire investigator will meet face-to-face with the Incident Commander and get a briefing on the fire. The mutual aid fire investigator will then develop an action plan to accomplish the task, including a list of staffing requirements, equipment needs, and any other specific needs to aid in the investigation. This action plan will be approved by the on-scene Incident Commander.
3. The fire investigator or designated officer of the requesting department will maintain the role of lead investigator.
4. When the mutual aid fire investigator is investigating in the absence of the departments investigator the mutual aid fire investigator will be relieved as soon as possible by the requesting department's investigator.
5. All necessary scene support equipment and staffing requirements will be provided by the requesting department. This assistance or support may include and is not limited to scene security, personnel for scene examination, lighting equipment, or any other supplies or support as needed to conduct the cause and origin investigation. If at any time arson or any other crime is suspected, the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction will be contacted for assistance.
6. It is recommended that the mutual aid fire investigator use a standard method of fire investigation documentation. Utilizing a standard method of documentation will facilitate ease of transition when the department's investigator takes over and completes the investigation.
7. At the conclusion of the fire cause determination, or when relieved, the mutual aid fire investigator will meet with the Incident Commander and provide a briefing on the preliminary findings. Some fire investigations may be simple and straightforward with no necessary follow-up required. However, some fire investigations may be complex, with additional fire scene evaluation, witness interviews, lab test results, or other follow-up required.

8. As needed an extended action plan will be proposed to the incident commander outlining fire scene security, evidence collecting procedures, and any other special considerations.
9. If requested by the Incident Commander, the fire investigator will prepare a written report to include the actions and findings of the investigation. The report will be completed at conclusion of the investigation in a timely manner generally within two weeks. Once prepared, the written report will be submitted to the requesting Incident Commander.
10. When the mutual aid investigator has completed the assignment, the investigator will provide the current Director of the Monterey County Fire & Arson Task Force, within 72 hours, a documented summary of the incident, in a form deemed acceptable by the director.